

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF TOUCH THERAPY ON PATIENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE

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AIM: To evaluate the effects of touch therapies (i.e. massage with/without the use of essential oils) on patients perceptions of their symptoms and their quality of life in a palliative care setting. The underlying hypothesis is that despite relentless progression of their disease, with touch therapy there is an implicit shift in patient's perceptions of their QoL and adaptation to their situation.

Methods: 60 patients with advanced cancer were randomly assigned to an intervention group (received 2 touch therapy sessions) or a control group. All patients were interviewed twice on commencement of study and 7 days later. Individual QoL was assessed using SEIQoL – DW together with the impact of symptoms and their both on QoL. Levels of anxiety and mood were measured using the HAD scale. Generalised self-efficacy scale was used to assess perceived behavioural control and Life Orientation Test was used as an indicator of optimism. Critical incident amend the therapy was also recorded.

Results: 38 patients completed the study, 17 in the intervention group and 21 in the control group. There were no significant differences at baseline interview in any of the outcome measurement for either group. At the second interview there was a significant improvement in QoL for the intervention group; a highly significant improvement in anxiety scores. There was no significant improvement in depression scores. Optimism scores in the intervention group showed no significant increase. There was no significant difference in optimism scores.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that touch therapy service as provided, is facilitating an improvement in patient's perceptions of their QoL and decreasing anxiety levels. Further analysis is ongoing to assess in more detail what other factors are affected by touch therapies.